

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1.9
Ag81Ush

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIBRARY



BOOK NUMBER 1.9
Ag81Ush

gpo 8-7671

1.9
Ag 81458

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ FEB 10 1934 ★
U. S. Department of Agriculture

THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AN HISTORIC SKETCH

By
Nellie E. Fealy

April 2,
1933

USDA
LIB

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AN HISTORIC SKETCH

By
Nellie E. Fealy
April 2, 1935

--

May 15, 1932, the United States Department of Agriculture reached the average maximum age of man--three score and ten years. On that date in 1862 the activities of its forerunners, the agricultural societies of the country and the Agricultural Section of the Patent Office, culminated in an act approved by President Abraham Lincoln establishing the Department.

The first aid given agriculture in this country came through King James of England in 1622, when he encouraged the breeding of silk worms in Virginia. In 1642 the general court of Massachusetts offered premiums for sheep raising, and in 1657 the Virginia legislature passed an act to stimulate the growing of hops. In 1732 a parcel of Government-owned land in Georgia was allotted for growing mulberry trees in the aid of silk culture, and in 1733 to 1743 the English Parliament granted \$600,000 to promote the cultivation of indigo and other crops in Georgia. In 1748 Parliament put a premium on silk culture in the colonies, and in 1766 the South Carolina Assem-

bly voted one thousand pounds for the establishment of silk filature in Charleston.

Then came the Revolution and the special efforts in behalf of agriculture were lost sight of.

When the British Board of Agriculture was established in 1793 its chief promoter, Sir John Sinclair, suggested to Washington that a similar Board ought to form a part of the American Government. Washington was favorable, but felt we must walk before we run and that smaller societies must prepare the way for greater organizations.

In his last message to Congress, December 7, 1796, he brought the matter to its attention in the following statement:

In proportion as nations advance in population the cultivation of the soil becomes more and more an object of public patronage. * * * Among the means which have been employed to this end none have been attended with greater success than the establishment of Boards composed of public characters charged with collecting and diffusing information, and enabled by premiums and small pecuniary aid to encourage and assist a spirit of discovery and improvement. This species of establishment contributes doubly to the increase of improvements by stimulating to enterprise and experiment and by drawing to a common center the results everywhere of individual skill and observation and spreading them thence over the whole nation.

His suggestion was favorably received generally and the House of Representatives referred the subject to a committee. On January 11, 1797, the creation of such a body was recommend-

ed, but differences of opinion between city and country members on direct taxes and Jefferson's opposition to a military academy, which was associated with the proposal, made the friends of the measure fear to have it come to a vote and it was never further debated.

In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries numerous local and county agricultural societies sprang up in various parts of the country. In 1852 there were about 300 of these in 31 States and 5 Territories, and in 1860 there were recorded 941 agricultural organizations.

The establishment of State agricultural societies proceeded slowly, but by 1860 such societies were organized in Kentucky, Connecticut, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

In the meantime a sentiment in favor of a national agricultural society had been developing. In 1841 a convention was called of men anxious to "elevate the character and standing and cultivation of the American soil." It was held in Washington, its purpose being the organization of such a society with the \$540,000 bequeathed to the United States by Hugh Smithson, who died in 1829, to "increase and diffuse knowledge among men." The realization of the hopes of those who desired to make the endowment practically useful were dispelled by the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution in

1846, as provided in Mr. Smithson's will, and the national agricultural society remained dormant until 1852.

On May 20 of that year a call for a national agricultural convention was issued by Marshall R. Wilder, president of the Massachusetts Board of Agriculture, representing presidents of associations of 7 States. In response to this call 152 delegates from 13 States and Territories met at the Smithsonian Institution June 24, 1852, and voted to form a national agricultural society. A constitution was adopted and Wilder was elected president. He continued in office 6 years and actively promoted the work of the society. Its influence was widely extended by the publication of a journal and by exhibitions held in succeeding years in the States.

As declared in the preamble of this society, its object was "to improve the agriculture of the country." It was incorporated by an act of Congress approved April 19, 1860.

At this meeting in the Smithsonian Institution it was proposed to ask Congress to establish a Department of Agriculture and the subject was discussed at length. At the meeting the next year, February 2, 1853, a resolution was adopted favoring a Department of Agriculture, and this was reaffirmed at the annual meetings in several subsequent years.

Meantime some active work had been done by the Government in regard to agriculture. In 1836 Henry L. Ellsworth, Commissioner of Patents, received from Government representatives abroad and others considerable quantities of seeds and plants and distributed these to enterprising farmers throughout the country. This he did without Government authority or aid further than the use of the frank of Congressmen friends. In his annual report he urged that the Government take up the work of aiding agriculture in this and in other ways. His suggestions and arguments led to an appropriation in 1839 of \$1,000 for collecting and distributing seeds, prosecuting agricultural investigations, and procuring agricultural statistics. This amount was later increased until it finally reached \$60,000 in 1861.

Under this appropriation there was soon started in the Patent Office, which became a part of the Department of the Interior on the latter's establishment in 1849, the publication of articles regarding agricultural education and the diffusing of practical scientific information on agricultural subjects. At the suggestion of the Commissioner of Patents, William D. Bishop, the Secretary of the Interior, Hon. J. Thompson, appointed Thomas G. Cleason February 3, 1860, Superintendent of an agricultural division under him. At the suggestion of Mr. Bishop's successor, Philip F. Thomas, Secretary Thompson on May 12 following rescinded this order so far as related to the transfer of the work to the Department.

In 1861 David P. Hollowell, then Commissioner of Patents, in his first annual report made a strong argument for the establishment of a separate Department of the Government to deal with

the interests of agriculture and the productive arts.

Finally the next year Justin Morrill, of Vermont, who entered the Federal House of Representatives December 4, 1835, introduced the bill creating the Department of Agriculture, and it was passed and was approved by President Lincoln May 15, 1862, as already stated. And thus was fulfilled the dream that was dreamed by great men, such as Franklin, Washington, et al, regarding aid to agriculture, and the Department started on its mission, which was--

to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture, in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants.

From 1862 to 1868 the Department functioned in the Patent Office, but in the latter year its building was completed and became its quarters.

For more than 25 years it was under Commissioners of Agriculture. There were six of these--Isaac Newton, appointed by President Lincoln and served from 1862 to 1867, when he died from the effects of a sunstroke the year before; Gen. Horace Capron, appointed by President Johnson in 1867 and served until 1871, when he resigned; Judge Frederick Watts, appointed by President Grant in 1871 and served until 1877; Hon. William G. Le Duc, appointed by President Hayes and served from 1877 to 1881; Dr. George Loring, appointed by President Garfield and served

from 1881 to 1885; and Hon. Norman J. Colman, appointed by President Cleveland and served as Commissioner from April 5, 1885, to February 9, 1889. On this latter date, largely through the efforts of the National Grange, founded in 1868, and also the Farmers' Congress and other influential bodies and individuals, an act was passed making the Department an executive branch of the Government, to be in charge of a Secretary of Agriculture.

Colman was the first Secretary and served in that capacity to March 4, 1889, a little less than a month. Since his time to the present there have been 9 Secretaries, that is Jeremiah Rusk, 1889-1893; J. Sterling Morton, 1893-97; James Wilson, 1897-1913; David Houston, 1913-1919, who resigned to become Secretary of the Treasury; Edwin T. Meredith, 1919-1921, who completed Secretary Houston's term; Henry C. Wallace, 1921-1924, who died in office; Howard M. Gore, October, 1924, to March 4, 1925, who completed the unexpired term of Secretary Wallace; William M. Jardine, 1925-1929; Arthur M. Hyde, 1929-1933; and Henry A. Wallace, 1933 to a date yet to be recorded.

The Department centers effort on all national and interstate problems requiring facilities not possessed by the States, the State agricultural colleges, the experiment stations, and the State departments of agriculture handling the respective State problems.

As now organized the Department has 17 units:

The Office of the Secretary, that is the administrative branch, includes the Office of Assistant Secretary, 4 Directors, and Office of the Solicitor.

The Director of Scientific Work, Dr. A. F. Woods, who is my superior officer, was Dean of the College of Agriculture and Acting President of the University of Minnesota for seven years, from 1910 to 1917, was President of the Maryland State College for four years, from 1917 to 1920, and President of the University of Maryland, which he founded, from 1920 to 1936, when he resigned to become Director of Scientific Work of the Department of Agriculture. He has general supervision of all scientific investigations of the Department and coordinates with them the scientific projects of each of the State Experiment Stations.

The Office of Experiment Stations, which is a branch of Doctor Woods' office, handles the correlation of cooperative research projects with the State stations, supervises the expenditures of the Federal appropriations by the stations, and abstracts and publishes the abstracts of the station and other agricultural literature. This Office was established by the Hatch Act, approved March 2, 1887, and operates under this act, the Adams Act, approved by President Roosevelt March 16, 1906, and the Furnell Act, approved by President Coolidge

February 24, 1925.

The Hatch Act provided for an experiment station in connection with each agricultural college established under the Morrill Act and granted \$18,000 annually to each, to be equally divided between white and colored agricultural colleges in the States in which the latter are established: the Adams Act provided \$5,000 additional for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1906, and an annual increase of \$2,000 for each of the succeeding five years until the annual amount was \$30,000; and the Burnell Act provided for an increase of \$20,000 for each State for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1926, and \$10,000 additional for each year up to June 30, 1930, to a total of \$50,000 annually, the amount now received by each.

Through the efforts of Doctor Woods Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, formerly president of the Iowa State College, began extension work in the South. The success of this work and the movement of the agricultural colleges in asking for appropriations for such work led to the passage and the approval of the Smith-Lever Act May 8, 1914. This act was administered by the Office of Experiment Stations until the appropriation act approved March 4, 1915, changed that office to States Relations, and the act was administered by this branch until the appropriation act approved February 23, 1923, created the

Extension Service and reestablished the Office of Experiment Stations.

The Library is also a branch of the Office of the Director of Scientific Work. The first appropriation for it and for "a laboratory" was made during Commissioner Newton's regime and was \$4,000. This is one of the largest agricultural libraries, if not the largest, in the world. It has 240,000 volumes, this being accession material only.

The Director of Extension Work, in cooperation with land-grant colleges, carries on extension in the United States through State and county agents, specialists, home demonstration agents, and assistants to these, numbering 3,112, and Boys and Girls Clubs, or 4-H clubs (heart, head, hand, and health), numbering 890,374 in 1921. For some years prior to 1909 extension work was carried on to some extent by land-grant colleges. In that year it was proposed to ask Congress to appropriate money to these colleges for the purpose of extension work, and the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, as already stated answered this request.

The Director of Information has charge of all avenues of information given out by the Department--the bulletins, the press service, and the radio service. This Office originated as the Division of Publications, which began as a Section

of the Division of Statistics in 1889.

The Director of personnel and Business Administration has supervision of the work indicated by his title.

The Office of the Solicitor has charge of all legal matters of the Department.

The first Bureau established in the Department was that of Animal Industry, provided for by an act of Congress May 29, 1884. Under Commissioner Le Duc an investigation of animal diseases was begun in 1878 and was kept up with increasing energy. Under Commissioner Loring a veterinary experiment station was established, and this led to the Bureau at the time mentioned.

Next came the Weather Bureau, created by an act of October 1, 1890. The study of climate and storms had long been fostered by various Departments of the Government and by the Smithsonian Institution, as well as by several of the States before the Department of Agriculture was established. The meteorological data gathered by the Smithsonian Institution were published in the Monthly Reports of the Department from 1863, to January, 1872. Meantime the efforts of many to induce the Government to establish a practical service for the prediction of storms and floods culminated in the organization of a meteorological division in the Office of the

Chief Signal Corps Officer of the Army. This was accomplished by an act of Congress June 10, 1872, which made an appropriation to the War Department for the purpose of collecting and publishing meteorological information for the benefit of agriculture. On July 1, 1891, that is nine months after the meteorological Division had been made the Weather Bureau it was transferred to the Department of Agriculture.

The next reorganization, which was brought about by Dr. A. F. Woods, aided by Dr. Erwin F. Smith, resulted in 4 bureaus, that is Plant Industry, Forestry, Chemistry, and Soils, these being established by an act of Congress March 2, 1901.

The bureau of Plant Industry had its beginning in the appointment of William Saunders by Commissioner Newton as Superintendent of the Propagating Garden, which was started in 1858, while the Patent Office was conducting work on agriculture. Mr. Saunders' jurisdiction became the Division of Gardens and Grounds and was included in the Bureau. The Bureau also included the Division of Botany, which originated in 1868 or 1869 by the appointment of C. C. Parry as botanist; the Division of Pomology, established in 1886; the Division of Agrostology, established in 1895, and which became the Division of Farm Management Investigations in the Bureau; and the Division of Vegetable Physiology and Pathology, which was

the nucleus of the Bureau, and which originated in 1886 as the Section of Mycology, the name being changed in 1887 to the Division of Vegetable Pathology, and later to the Division of Vegetable Physiology and Pathology.

The Forest Service, so named under the appropriation act approved March 3, 1905, was made a Bureau by an act of Congress approved March 2, 1901, as previously stated. It had its beginning in the appointment of Franklin Hough as special agent in 1877 to carry on work in forestry. Several years later the work was organized into the Division of Forestry and reorganized under an act in 1886. Mr. Pinchot, now Governor of Pennsylvania, became Chief of this Division in 1898.

The Bureau of Chemistry and Soils was established under the appropriation act approved January 18, 1927, which merged the Bureau of Chemistry and the Bureau of Soils. The Bureau of Chemistry had its origin in the appointment of C. M. Wetherill as a chemist August 21, 1862, and the organization of the Division of Chemistry the same year. Dr. Harvey Wiley, father of the Pure Food Law, was the seventh chief of this Division and became Chief of the Bureau on its establishment. The Division of Soils was for a time a branch of the Weather Bureau but in 1894 became an independent Division of the Department.

The Bureau of Entomology was established by the appropriation

act approved April 23, 1904. Its beginning was the appointment of Townsend Glover in 1863, in which year the Division of Entomology was organized.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics was organized under this title by the appropriation act of May 11, 1922. This now large Bureau of varied interests had its beginning in the appointment of Lewis Hollman in 1863 as statistician, in which year the Division of Statistics was established. Under the appropriation act approved March 3, 1903, it became the Bureau of Statistics and remained as such until the appropriation act approved June 30, 1914, made it the Bureau of Crop Estimates and provided for an Office of Markets. The appropriation act approved March 4, 1915, continued this Bureau and provided for an Office of Markets and Rural Organization. The next year, under the appropriation act approved August 11, it became the Office of Markets and Rural Organization. Under the appropriation act of March 4, 1917, the Bureau of Markets was established and the Bureau of Crop Estimates. Under the act approved March 3, 1921, these two Bureaus were merged into the Bureau of Markets and Crop Estimates and provision made for the Office of Farm Management and Farm Economics. The next year, or in 1922, all these activities were merged in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

The Bureau of Biological Survey was established as such

under an act approved March 3, 1905. It had its origin in the Division of Ornithology and Mammalogy, established under an act July 1, 1886. Ten years later, under an act received by the President April 14, 1896, the name was changed to the Division of Biological Survey and so remained until the establishment of the Bureau.

The Bureau of Public Roads was established under this title by the appropriation act of October 1, 1918. It started as Public Road Inquiries under the appropriation act approved August 8, 1894; changed to Public Roads by an act approved March 3, 1905; changed to Public Roads Inquiries by an act sent to the President April 14, 1896; to the Bureau of Public Roads and Rural Engineering by an act approved March 4, 1915; and to the Bureau of Public Roads October 1, 1918, as already stated.

The Bureau of Home Economics was established under the appropriation act approved February 26, 1923. It originated as an independent branch known as Nutrition under the appropriation act approved August 8, 1894; changed to Nutrition Investigations by an act received by the President April 14, 1896; and under this title became a part of the Office of Experiment Stations as provided by the appropriation act approved March 3, 1905, being carried on by that Office until the establishment of the Bureau.

The Bureau of Dairy Industry was established under the appropriation act approved May 11, 1926, having been made the Bureau of Dairying by an act approved February 19, 1925. Previous to this latter date the dairy work was a part of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering was established by the appropriation act approved July 7, 1932. Prior to that time it was a part of the Bureau of Public Roads.

Food and Drug Administration was established as Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration by an act approved January 18, 1927, the word Insecticide being omitted under the appropriation act approved May 27, 1930. Prior to 1927 it was a part of the Bureau of Chemistry.

The Bureau of Plant Quarantine was so named under the act approved July 7, 1932, having been established as Plant Quarantine and Control Administration by the appropriation act approved May 16, 1928. Prior to the latter date it was the Federal Horticultural Board, established by an act of Congress approved August 11, 1916, to carry out the provisions of the Plant Quarantine Act

approved March 4, 1915. The Bureau of Entomology administered this act until the establishment of the Board.

Enforcement of the Grain Futures Act was provided for by an act approved February 16, 1923. The duty of this branch is the administration of the Act of September 21, 1922.

The growth of the Department may be summarized by saying that--

In 1862 there were 9 employes working on agriculture in the Patent Office when the Department was established. Now there are 26,189 employes in the Department, 5,518 being stationed in Washington and 20,671 in the field.

The first year of the Department's existence two scientists were appointed. Now there are 4,000, more or less, who conduct investigations in every field connected with agriculture.

The land assigned to the Department in 1862 was the Propagating Garden and the 40 acres constituting the Departmental grounds. Now it owns the Arlington Farm, consisting of approximately 300 acres, and 34 stations in various parts of the country. The last one of these was acquired the past year. It is known as the Chase at Hill

Sanctuary. It consists of more than 2,000 acres and was deeded to the Government by Colonel and Mrs. Raymond Robins. Besides these it has 1,800 stations or farms, more or less, on which semi-permanent work is carried on.

There is a record of 1 bulletin having been published in the Department the first year of its life. Now it publishes during each year the Yearbook, the Journal of Agricultural Research, 4 series of bulletins, annual and other reports, soil surveys, miscellaneous publications, Agricultural Situation, clip sheet, Crops and Markets, Extension Service Review, Experiment Station Record, Forest Worker, Monthly Weather Review, Official Record, Public Roads, circulars, and leaflets. Besides these a vast number of papers are mimeographed. Within the past fiscal year 1,535 of the publications mentioned were issued, and 15,990,752 were distributed. This was less than for some time previous, owing to the depression.

The annual appropriation for the Department the first year of its life was \$64,000. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1934, it is \$100,309,091, which is \$44,302,463 less than the appropriation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1930, the decrease also being due to the depression. Of the amount named only about 10 per cent is directly

for agriculture, the balance being for public roads, the Weather Bureau, meat inspection, etc., which are for the public generally.

The Department's first home, which was torn down about two years ago to make way for the new Administration building, was erected at a cost of approximately \$100,000. The present construction when completed will give the Department a home costing approximately \$14,500,000, a space of approximately 1,196,000 square feet, and one of the largest if not the largest building in the world.

1933

~~1933~~

